How to win the 3MT

Dr Megan Brewer
Graduate Research Development Advisor (Science)

Peter Browne
Intangible Communication

gr.development@mq.edu.au
So, what’s your PhD about...?
An 80,000 word PhD thesis would take 9 hours to present.

Your time limit... **3 minutes**.

**superficial?**

**trivialising?**

**dumbing down?**
What is the 3MT?

What’s a “three minute thesis”?
  an engaging & dynamic talk
on your thesis topic and its significance
in three minutes
in language appropriate to an intelligent but non-specialist audience

http://threeminutethesis.org

3MT is a professional international competition which was developed by the University of Queensland in 2008.
What’s the aim?

To build your capacity to explain research to a non-specialist audience and consolidate your ideas & discoveries

To promote higher degree research within university and wider communities
## Who can enter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can enter</th>
<th>Cannot enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anyone currently enrolled in a PhD or MPhil</td>
<td>MRes candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MPhil candidates can progress to MQ Uni finals, but not to Asia-Pacific 3MT competition)</td>
<td>Those enrolled in a <em>professional</em> doctorate by coursework (ie less than 2/3 research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDR candidates at time of <em>first</em> 3MT heat, regardless of status change by Asia Pacific event date (16 Sept)</td>
<td>HDR <em>graduates</em> at time of first heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HDR candidates who have not yet passed Confirmation of Candidature by first heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For finals, those who have not won their preceding heats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition](https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition)
## What are the rules?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>✔️ Dos</th>
<th>✗ Don’ts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay within 3 minutes</td>
<td>Go overtime (or too far undertime)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use one static slide</td>
<td>Use more than one slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak on your research project</td>
<td>Include animation on your slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in the frame for the whole talk</td>
<td>Use any other media (sound/video files)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film continuously for the 3 minutes (no cuts or other angles)</td>
<td>Use any props, eg costumes, instruments, samples, models, equipment, other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Memorise your talk]</td>
<td>Deliver your talk as a song, poem, rap, role play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition
What am I judged on?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension and Content</th>
<th>Engagement and Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Logical flow/storyline</td>
<td>• A reinforcing slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearly explained technical words</td>
<td>• Did not to trivialise or generalise their research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearly articulated topic and significance</td>
<td>• Good eye contact; colourful voice; conveys enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clearly articulated results and/or impact</td>
<td>• Captures and maintains attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appropriate pace</td>
<td>• Piques interest to find out more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What’s in it for me?

Skills

Portfolio piece

Fame & fortune

And this year...

Each of the 12 finalists receive an exclusive Pitch Masterclass, 1:1 Coaching, and a spotlight interview on 2SER radio.

MQ Final Prizes
• Winner: $1000
• Second Place: $500
• Third Place: $250
• People's Choice: $250
What’s great about entering

It forced me to think about the big picture, truly define what I do, and how to explain this to others, simply and succinctly.

Vicki Metzis
UQ 3MT Finalist, 2010

Anytime I go into a job interview in the future I have the best parts of my PhD, the real essence of it, wrapped up in an explanation that even non-specialists can understand. That will be a definite advantage.

Tim Paris,
2012 Trans-Tasman Winner

[Competing] in the 3MT is both terrifying and yet one of the best thing you’ll ever do to focus your research. Although I didn’t make it through, I gained valuable feedback from my peers and academics, and [am] all the more determined to get it ‘right’ next time. The main thing I gained from the experience is that although people were genuinely interested in my research, they were a little confused by the theory I had pulled together to justify it all.

Comment by IMMED8 in blogpost
thesiswhisperer.com/2017/07/12/is-it-worth-doing-the-three-minute-thesis/
Should I enter this year?

What’s stopping you?

Misconceptions

Valid objections
So how do I win the 3MT?
Additional considerations

3MT remains VIRTUAL!!

Video submission only
(no live presentations before an audience)
Lights, camera, action!

Virtual 3MT tips

Equipment:
✓ Video camera/ smart phone
✓ Tripod / camera mount (not a person!)
✓ Video editing software

Location:
✓ Indoor room
✓ plain background

Lighting:
✓ position light source in front of you
✓ natural light is better than artificial
✓ avoid dark shadows

Eye contact:
✓ position the camera at eye level
✓ look directly into the camera
✓ memorise your talk

Audio:
✓ eliminate background noise
✓ eliminate echo/reverb with soft furnishings
✓ a continuous 3 minute take: no sound edits or breaks
✓ if using a lapel mic, test levels and potential interference
✓ speak clearly and with passion

Visuals:
✓ Remain in focus at all times
✓ Stand and deliver (half of torso showing)
✓ No props, costumes, busy or virtual backgrounds, animations

Note: Competitors *will not* be judged on video/recording quality or editing capabilities (optional inclusions). Judging will focus on the presentation, ability to communicate research to a non-specialist audience, and 3MT PowerPoint slide.
Video formats and requirements

- Film in the horizontal, i.e. landscape orientation
- Film on a plain background
- Film from a static position and from one camera angle
- Insert the MQ 3MT title slide at the beginning
- Insert your 3MT PowerPoint slide (top right corner/cut to): use video editing software for this, e.g. kapwing, OpenShot video editor

For step-by-step instructions, go to the Virtual 3MT Competitor Guide or Manual
Submitting your entry

You need to submit:
• your video, as a vimeo link
• your two slides (title slide and 3MT slide)

To get a vimeo link:
1. Create a free vimeo account at vimeo.com
2. Upload your video
3. Give your video a title: Name_3MT Title, eg JulietLum_TomatoesHelpWriters
4. Enter the details of your video
5. Vimeo will assign a link (URL) to your video.

https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition
Key dates for 3MT 2022

Video submission faculty heat deadlines:

**FSE:** Monday 15 August

**FMHHS:** End of August, date TBC

**FoA:** Wednesday 17 August

**MQBS:** Friday 19 August

NB. Some schools/departments may also run heats which will be earlier than these dates – keep an eye out for information from your faculty liaisons and ddHDRs

- 2 Sept
  - Faculties each submit 3 finalists to MQ 3MT finals

- Early Sept
  - People's Choice voting period (if fully online)
  - Judges’ deliberation period (if fully online)
  - Campus event scheduled at 2pm on 6 Sept (if face to face)

- By 9 Sept
  - MQ Winner announced!

- 16 Sept
  - 2022 Virtual Asia Pacific 3MT Video Submission deadline

- 19 Oct
  - 2022 Virtual Asia-Pacific 3MT Competition
  - People's Choice Vote and Winners announced

https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition
Practise Practise Practise!

- Watch previous winners’ 3MTs.
- Read your talk aloud with a timer. **Refine.**

- Memorise your talk. Practise looking directly into the camera

- Film yourself and add in slide. Upload video to vimeo
- Watch & listen. **Refine.**

- Share your video with friends and family. Ask for constructive criticism. **Refine**
3MT feedback and practice

Book a personalised feedback session on your 3MT presentation or discuss your idea with your Graduate Research Development Advisor:

Dr Megan Brewer (STEMM)  
megan.brewer@mq.edu.au

Dr Francesca Mataraga (HASS)  
francesca.mataraga@mq.edu.au

Dr Frank Song (HASS)  
frank.song@mq.edu.au

Dr Andrew Dunstall (Professional Development)  
andrew.dunstall@mq.edu.au
Resources

https://students.mq.edu.au/study/hdr/3-minute-thesis-competition
Timeline, Rules, Judging criteria, Judges, MQ Prizes

https://threeminutethesis.uq.edu.au/virtual-competition
Rules, Judging criteria, and Virtual Competitor guide

Preparing for the 3MT eBook.
RRP $9.90.

Free downloads:
So, what’s your PhD about...?
Q & A